



Price of a barrel
of petroleum
today:

US\$ 42.63

INSIDE TODAY

WORLD NEWS

FIGHTING RAGES



An Israeli soldier sits in an armored vehicle before heading into the Gaza Strip, near Israel's border with Gaza Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2009. Israel tentatively welcomed a proposal Wednesday from Egypt and France for a Gaza cease-fire and briefly halted its offensive to allow aid to reach civilians, but also gave the military a green light to press ahead with its assault on Hamas.

See *INTERNATIONAL NEWS*

SPORTS NEWS

SENT PACKING



In this Aug. 28, 2008 file photo, Dallas Cowboys cornerback Adam Jones gestures to the crowd before an NFL preseason football game against the Minnesota Vikings in Irving, Texas. Troubled cornerback Adam 'Pacman' Jones was released by the Dallas Cowboys Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2009 following a season in which he had no interceptions and was suspended six games for an off-field fight.

See *Sports Today*

"New Class for the Police School"



Oranjestad, Aruba: To alleviate the need for personnel in the Police force of Aruba, the ministerial counsel approved to take

15 people in service of the Aruban Police force to follow basic police training.

Continued on Page 3

Winners won cash money this year

Tamara Llanes won 10 thousand florins in the Renaissance Campaign



Llanes said. This time Mrs. Llanes bought a gift for her sibling and took home a whopping Afl. 10.000, - cash prize. Owner of Rage Mrs. Marny Wever was very happy that one of her clients had won this prize, and was present at the giving of this prize.

The second prize went to Mrs. Elfrida Goeloe, who bought a dress at Javaruba. Mrs. Elfrida's sister, who saw the dress, recommended it to her sister as a beautiful dress she could wear to her Christmas dinner.

Continued on Page 2

ORANJESTAD - During the end of the year campaign, Renaissance Marketplace gifted his clients cash money. To have participated in this raffle would have been easy. Buying an amount of Afl. 10, - in any store or restaurant the client would have received a coupon to

be filled out and deposited in a prize box. Mrs. Tamara Llanes, shopped just before Christmas at Rage. This is a tradition that all her special gifts are bought at Rage, so as to get a special gift for her loved ones.

"Rage gifts always stay so nicely wrapped" Mrs.

Premium Chicken Line
Crispy or Grilled



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Tamara Llanes won 10 thousand florins in the Renaissance Campaign



Continued from Front Page

She struck it lucky in way and won herself Afl. 2500, - cash. The third prize, a sum of Afl. 1000, - went to Mr. Richard Croes.

Mr. Croes did his Christmas shopping at Rage. Congratulations to all the winners and Renaissance Marketplace would like to wish all a good start to the year 2009. □



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Technicians of Canon at Antraco Aruba Group have achieved their ATSP



This year Antraco Aruba Group managed to acquire the Silver Level of the Association of Technical Service Professionals, better known as ATSP.

With this achievement, Antraco has been recognized to have a very high level of service in the Latin American Canon Organization.

The exam to reach this level

is quite difficult. It takes more than just "know how" in the mechanical software issues, but also the ICT requirements come into play. Today the Canon machines are more of a "Solutions Center" than just a copier, you can send/receive faxes remotely, scan, access the internet and much more. All these features require that the technicians have to

be well prepared to deal with servicing and maintaining these machines. Antraco Aruba Group strongly believes in properly training their personnel, to provide the best service possible in the field of technology.

On the picture we can see: Robert W. Croes II, Managing Director, the technicians, Benito Gomes, Sydney

Boekhoudt, Ronald Kelly, Karel Dirksz and Guiseppe Yarzagaray, Manager of the technical department.

Congratulations to all the technicians and Antraco Aruba Group with this prestigious accomplishment. □

restaurant



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*Appetizer; Mostard soup
Ceasar salad*

*Middle course: kebab pincho served with
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*Maincourse: Fishstew
Tenderloin pincho on a bed of spicy vegetables
Mexican chicken platter*

*Dessert : Brownie with ice cream
Melon sorbet with ice cream*

location: Perle d'Or

For reservation call: 5877710 /5932660

POLICE

Continued from Front Page

Continued In total a group of 133 people applied and the commission selected a group of 15, based on their personality exam, medical exam, and background check.

The 2008 class, started with the course and yesterday they visited the chief of police, Mr. P. de Witte accompanied by their mentor Mr. Eddy Ras and chief of personnel and organization of the police force, Mrs. Maria Dirks.

The 15 Aspiring students are:

T. van der Biezen, E. Carolina, J. Cornes, R. Dinmohamed, J. Figaroa, C. Franken, J. Gomez, J. Kock, E. Lacle, V. Lisper, A. Maduro, Y. Richardson- Petit, A. Vrolijk, A. Webb y F. Werleman.

These people will be attending the basic police training for two years and they have to finish 13 modules successfully, to then be put in service at the Department of Surveillance of the Aruban Police Force. □

Discover the bestselling novel about Aruba!

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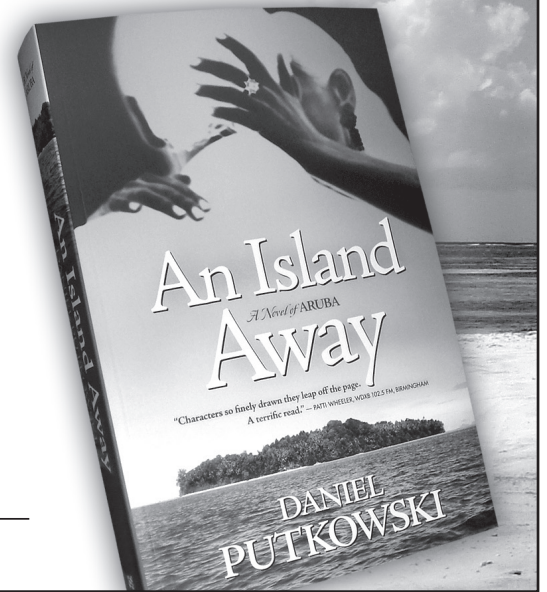
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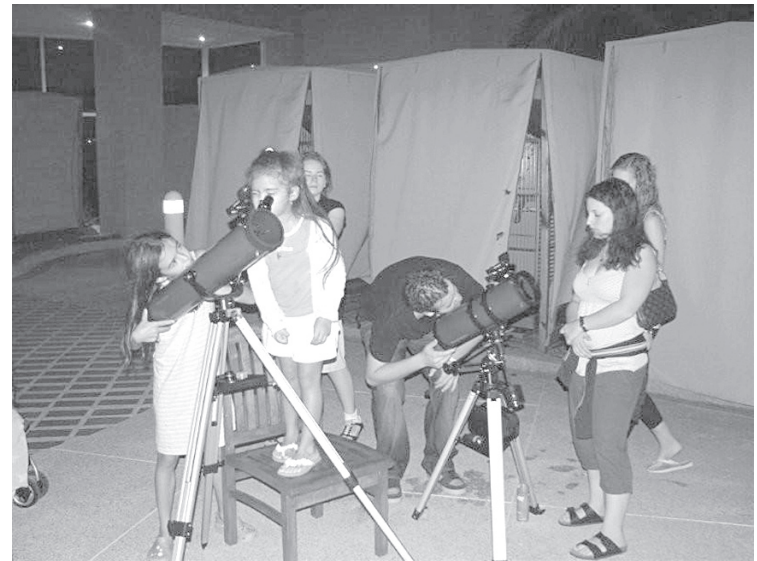
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At The Westin Resort, Aruba

Families enjoy Stargazing



PALM BEACH - One of the new amenities offered in Westin's Discovery Program was recently introduced at the resort. Stargazing is offered every Tuesday evening, allowing guests to view the nighttime sky through state-of-the-art telescopes.

The stars shine bright in the Caribbean sky, and families enjoy gathering on the resort's pool deck for an evening of stargazing orchestrated by Westin's

Director of Fun, Marielle Smeets, and her team.

The Discovery Program takes the family vacation experience to a new dynamic.

Typically, resorts often offer kid's clubs and activities geared toward the under five-year olds. The Westin takes that concept several steps further, implemented a menu of activities geared towards tots, tweens, teens, adults, and seniors; with many of those activities and programs, like Stargazing, tailored to bring the entire family-no matter the age-together.

The Westin delivers an "Industry Best" total family experience creating further value for guests, offering "a balance of engaging, unique, memorable and compelling activities for all age groups that is different, better and special." □



In their store at Royal Plaza

Little Switzerland hosted a VIP party for their clients



ORANJESTAD - The employees at the main store of Little Switzerland, located at Royal Plaza dressed up to meet their guests. The jewelry store rolled out the red carpet to their clients and special guest to a special event that

could only be referred to as a "VIP Party". This event offered special discount prices, never seen before, to their clients and special guests.

Continued on Next Page



In their store at Royal Plaza

Little Switzerland hosted a VIP party for their clients



Continued from Page 5

"Even though we are widely popular amongst the tourist, the local market is important to us, and we regularly hold events to spoil our locals as well." So said Vanesss Hollander, Marketing Director for this region, before announcing the winners during the event at Little Sitzerland, located at Royal Plaza Mall.

"We prepared discount corners that reached up to 75% discounts, what we normally never do in our stores."

Especially for the VIP party, Little Switzerland offered special prices on their

watches, jewelry, D'asgenta pieces, Llardo and not to exclude their new collection pieces by John Hardy for men and women, and also celebration by Tiffany & Co Charms.

Especially for the quest, there was a raffle of a very beautiful piece of the very famous Llardo of the Santa Family. The winner of this beautiful piece was Mrs. Nancy Maya. On the attached pictures one can appreciate some of the moments of this event, and also the winner of the raffle receiving their price. □



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Dutch and Antillean MPs finally start talks about future



ORANJESTAD - After several hours delay, the latest round of twice-yearly talks held between delegations from the Dutch parliament and the parliaments of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba has finally got underway on the island of Aruba. Aruba's Prime Minister Nelson Oduber and three ministers initially refused to address the

meeting, which irritated the Dutch delegation. Later on, Dr Oduber and Finance Minister Nilo Swaen agreed to address the meeting after all. It is thought one reason for their unwillingness to speak may have been the presence in the Dutch delegation of Hero Brinkman, an MP for the right-wing Freedom Party who is known for having accused Aruba's administration of being corrupt.

The Dutch MPs and their counterparts from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba will this week be discussing the planned constitutional reforms in

the Caribbean islands. At the moment, Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles are separate autonomous regions within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, enjoying different degrees of self-government. This is now set to change, with the break-up of the Netherlands Antilles seeing two of the islands, Curacao and St. Martin, following the separate-status autonomy example set by Aruba. The remaining three islands of the Netherlands Antilles - Bonaire, Saba and St Eustatius - will become special municipalities, under direct rule from The Hague. □

Caribbean Tankers, Little-Changed From Last Week, May Soon Fall

The cost to transport crude oil from the Caribbean on Aframax tankers may fall after little change last week, amid weak demand from refiners, a broker said.

Aframaxes today were hired for an average rate of Worldscale 202.5, according to New York-based Poten & Partners and Houston-based Lone Star, R.S. Platou. WS 202.5 is about \$38,145 a day after expenses, such as fuel and port fees.

Rates closed last year at WS 320. That's because the market adopted 2009 Worldscale rates based on record ship-fuel prices, meaning a lower Worldscale price is needed to give owners the same daily income.

"It reflects no real change from last week, it's steady across the board," Bruce Kahler, a Lone Star broker, said in a telephone interview from Houston. "We're going to have a downturn, no one is moving oil, they don't need it."

Slowing U.S. economic growth has cut demand for gasoline, increasing stockpiles

of crude oil and depressing demand from refineries for voyages.

Gasoline inventories rose 808,000 barrels to 208.1 million barrels in the week ended Dec. 26, a Dec. 31 Energy Department report showed. Crude oil supplies rose 549,000 barrels to 318.7 million barrels. Refineries operated at 82.5 percent of capacity, the lowest level since the period ended Oct. 10 when the Gulf Coast was recovering from hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

Worldscale points are a percentage of a nominal rate, or flat rate, for more than 320,000 specific routes. Flat rates, quoted in U.S. dollars a ton, are revised annually by the Worldscale Association in London to reflect changing costs.

The Caribbean is the world's third-largest Aframax-tanker market, after the Mediterranean and Southeast Asia. An Aframax is the most common tanker used to move oil in the region. It can carry 600,000 barrels of oil. □



KIDS EAT FREE

A dinner under the Caribbean sky!

Las Ramblas
Tapas & Charcoal Grill

The menu features authentic spanish tapas and entrees such as delicious Seafood Paella, USDA Beef Tenderloin & New Zealand Lamb Chops from the charcoal grill.

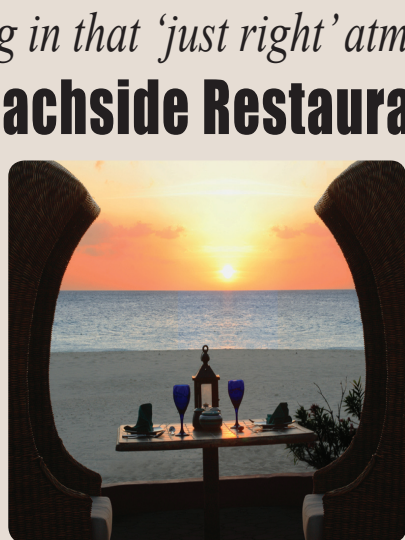
Open from 6.00pm - 10.30pm. Closed on Sundays and Wednesdays.
Reservation recommended
For reservation call 520-1100 ext. 6154

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Beachside Dining in that 'just right' atmosphere Matthew's Beachside Restaurant

EAGLE BEACH – Located at Casa del Mar resort in Eagle Beach, Matthew's is the brain child of Stefan Legger, who owned and operated Rumba Bar & Grill for 6 years. Matthew's redefines the concept of a beachside restaurant, delivering an exquisite blend of fine dining and comfort food with that "sand on your toes" feeling. The staff is extremely friendly and demonstrate very clearly that they are there for one thing; you.

Also being a very wanted venue for events and weddings, it very advisable to call and make a reservation, but if you want to just give it a go, no problem. Matthew's has a great bar which will keep you abreast of all the action, whether it's sports on one of their 3 TV's, or what cocktails the bartenders can whip up for you. Besides breakfast, lunch and dinner, Matthew's offers all you can eat spareribs on Tuesdays, Champagne brunch on Sundays and of course their famous daily happy hours with live music at the bar.



Opening Hours
Daily from 7:30am till 10:00pm

Daily Happy Hours
Noon - 1:00pm
4:00pm - 6:00pm (with live music)
9:00pm - 10:00pm

For Reservations & Information call:
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With Red Sail Sports Aruba Sunset Sailing along Aruba's scenic Coastline

PALM BEACH – Red Sail Sports is excited to let everyone know about its Catamaran Sailing program. A perfect combination of romance and relaxation, the moonlight sail along the scenic Aruban coastline offers food, drinks, music and more. Nibble on tantalizing snacks while you sit back and enjoy the sounds of live Caribbean music. The open bar offers a variety of tropical cocktails, including some Aruban specialties – be sure to ask the friendly crew for a Captain's Special! Aruba's trade winds provide the ideal conditions for sailing all day long aboard Red Sail Sports top quality, well maintained catamarans. If a sunset sail is a little late for the kids, you can set sail on Red Sail Sports' fun-filled Luncheon or Afternoon Snorkel Trips. The Snorkel Sails are safe for kids of all ages and brings



guests to all the best snorkeling spots in Aruba, including Aruba's most famous snorkel spot – the wreck of the Antilla where you can see yellowtail snapper, angelfish, blue head wrasse and dozens of other tropical fish. Red Sail Sports also offers a Sunset Sail where you can relax with a cocktail and enjoy the spectacular Aruban sunset. A Sunset Sail is truly the best way to watch the sun go down on your Caribbean holiday. **To make reservations or for more information call Red Sail Sports at 586-1603, visit your hotel concierge or your Red Sail Sports representative at the Hyatt, Allegro, Marriott and Renaissance Resorts.**

Come to Moby Dick's for a whale of a time

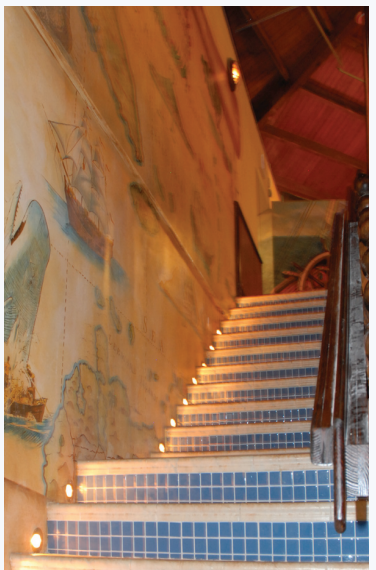
New Whale Species on Aruba


PASEO HERENCIA – Moby Dick's was a long time in the making, but the wait is now over. This week the bar went open for business, and the kitchen will be operational this weekend. What a truly beautiful restaurant this is. The interior on both floors is studded with artwork, amazing glass carvings, and both floors are dominated by a fountain with water running from ceiling to floor along multicoloured lit

fibre optic cables. The stairway is lined by an impressive painting which runs along the complete wall. The menu promises to be a true seafood lovers dream. Lobsters, fresh fish fillets, shrimps, Moby Dick's has everything on the menu. There is of course a land lubbers section for those who are so disposed. The wine list is impressive to say the least, and the cocktails are definitely worth a taste.



Moby Dick's is open for lunch as well. The chef has made a well rounded, extensive menu for you to choose from. You will find what you want, whatever your craving may be at that time. The staff is amongst the friendliest on the island, ever so attentive to your every whim. So long story short, for unbelievable seafood in unique surroundings, go to Moby Dick's. You'll have a whale of a time!






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"Aruhiba" Aruba's homemade cigar



ORANJESTAD - Benjamin Petrochi has started the newest export product of Aruba, locally produced cigars called 'Aruhiba'. These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba. Petrochi has always had an interest in the cigar business and has also sold cigars from outside, and now he is growing his own tobacco crop. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba he started his own production and cultivation of



"Aruhiba" cigars in Aruba. The process took 5 years Petrochi's dedication to the cigars is important for the molding and process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. The cigar case is specially designed for the cigars with the logo 'Aruhiba' and 'Made in Aruba'. Petrochi considers 'Aruhiba' a promotion for Aruba through fine quality cigars. The company sells international cigars as well. Buy a gift box of Aruhiba



Corona with five cigars and get 1 free for \$35.00. Located at the Historic Dutch Windmill from 8am to 8pm. Closed on Sunday. The only place to get Aruhiba and all major credit cards accepted. We have homemade and best premium Cuban Cigars. All cigars are legal through costum. Call 586-7833 or 593-6177. Open for tour operators and we have a large parking space. Come and see Mr. Petrochi rolling the cigars everyday.



At the Crystal Theater

"Havana Dance," is the hottest Cuban show on the island



ORANJESTAD - The elegant Crystal Theater sparkles with all the excitement of Las Vegas as the magnificent "Havana Dance" explodes on stage with a thrilling mix of Latin & Cuban music, colorful costumes and high energy, contemporary Cuban



dance.

"Havana Dance" is the biggest stage production in the Caribbean, featuring Cuban dancers and entertainers directly from Havana. The show delivers a purely Cuban spectacle, with a cast of 12 female ballerinas, 4 male dancers, 2 singers and 3 acrobats, performing a fresh program accompanied by live Cuban music performed on stage by a genuine Cuban orchestra, consisting of 5 professional Cuban musicians. This live dance AND live music combination as seen in our pictures, is 'first of its kind' on the island.

While the greater part of the "Havana Dance" review enjoys predominantly Cuban flavor, the show is graced with a truly unique Caribbean choreography, and many tropical touches. "Havana Dance" unfolds on a two-tiered stage, with entrances and exits to and off the arena at different heights, which presents a



new visual concept. The custom-designed costumes are sensual, daring, colorful, and luxurious and set "Havana Dance" apart from any other cabaret. Producer Steve Hudson who enjoyed an unprecedentedly-successful seven-year run with his previous "Let's Go Latin" review, conceived and created an exciting and much-evolved new must-see spectacle. Tickets for "Havana Dance" are US\$ 49.- Children under 12 pay US\$25.- Tickets are available at the theater box office, Renaissance Aruba Resort, and can also be purchased

at the concierge's desk at the Renaissance Aruba Resort. Other ticket vendors include the De Palm Tours and Pelican Adventure Activity Centers at the resorts. A special dinner & show package is also available in conjunction with the L.G. Smith's Steak & Chop House for US\$89.- per person. For additional information and reservations call the Crystal Theatre at Tel.: 583 6000, ext. 6115, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. After 5 p.m., call tel.: 583 6000 ext. 6357. Don't miss an opportunity to be greatly entertained by the sizzle of "Havana Dance." □

The Shoe that Breathes

Geox concept store opening at Renaissance Mall



ORANJESTAD – A new concept store will soon be checking into the Renaissance Mall and delivering the promise of happy feet to Aruba. The brand destined to revolutionize the way we feel about shoes is Geox and the new store will carry a large selection of styles for kids and adults, both ladies and gents. The very popular Italian brand has stores prominently located in every large city across Europe and in every stylish shopping mall. After buying the first pair, just out of curiosity, most individuals find themselves totally sold on the brand. They start wearing the state-of-the-art Geox shoes every day. “The shoes look tremendous,” says a company spokesperson, “they have a contemporary chic design, yet the reason why the Geox brand took off like wildfire in both Europe and the US is the patented technology which calls for micro-pores, small holes punctured in the soles, allowing the shoe “to breathe,” basically letting

air come in and excess heat escape.” “It’s a genial concept,” he continues, “and people who stand and walk during many working hours will find that feet wearing Geox are happy, and are never bothered by the heat.” You are invited to try a pair of Geox shoes for yourself and enjoy an unexpected discovery which you will then want to share with fellow-islanders, neighbors, friends and above all family members. The new Geox concept store in Aruba is planning to spread the good news

across the Caribbean, and negotiated with the Italian brand with the intention of opening more regional outlets. The Geox shoes are perfect for the tropics, as the perforated soles allow all the moisture naturally trapped inside ordinary shoes, to leave. And while it is natural for feet to sweat, Geox keeps feet healthy and dry, smelling sweet, and at the same time preventing water and debris from entering. The concept store now under construction at the Renaissance Mall will offer extensive collections for kids, because the shoe is especially beneficial for super-active children who tend to sweat as much as adults, in high temperatures. Hospitality workers, and anyone relying on cool, comfortable feet, will surely find Geox the best buy ever, a good fit at the right style, at a fair price. Geox shoes which hail from Italy, have been sold in the USA for the last 10 years and are now taking the rest of the world by storm. □

Aruba TODAY

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2 FOR TUESDAY HAPPY HOUR FROM 11PM TILL MIDNIGHT
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RED HOT SATURDAY
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We serve Breakfast at 8:30am **EVERY DAY**

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Guests honored at Costa Linda



ORANJESTAD - Recently, Mr. & Mrs. Maureen and Michael Wallace were honored as goodwill ambassadors of the island of Aruba. This couple has been traveling to Aruba for 21 consecutive years visiting all the way from California. They were honored at the Costa Linda Beach Resort, the hotel where they are lodging. This couple has visited several locations around the world and has always considered Aruba to be the best one. They also

commented that Aruba is their second home and they keep returning because of the warmth and hospitality of our people, and also due to how safe they feel when they are here. They brought several different families to Aruba so they too could get to know this paradise. They also brought their children to Aruba, who know bring their children to our island, making it three generations to visit our Island.

Mr. Wallace tells that he always had two rules, the first was to never buy timeshare and second, to never go back to the same place twice, yet 21 years later they are still coming to Aruba.

The couple tells how they celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary here with friends and family and how they keep coming to Aruba to do so. Mrs. Wallace tells about hard times, when she was plagued with breast cancer, about 12 years ago and how after consulting with her doctor came to Aruba, to then flew back to California to start her medical treatment. Present at the event, representatives of Costa Linda and also Rayon Koolman, representative of Tourism Directive. □

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Mr. David Hagerman honored at the Tamarijn Resort



EAGLE BEACH - Recently at the Tamarijn Beach Resort, Aruba vacationers were presented with honorary titles created by the Ministry of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guest visiting Aruba for ten and 20 consecutive years. Special friends of Aruba, enjoying ten or more annual vacations here, are given the Distinguished Guest certificate and those with twenty consecutive years are awarded the Ambassador of goodwill title. The recent honoring were effected by the Aruba Tourism Authority associate Ricardo Croes at the Tamarijn Beach which they call their home away from home. Mr. David Hagerman was honored as an distinguished visitor for the Island of Aruba. On picture Mr. Ricardo Croes together with David & family and also staff of Tamarijn Beach Resort



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In the end

CURACAO - Antillean Justice Minister David Dick's announcement that he will provide additional police assistance from Curaçao for St. Maarten during the high tourism season after all no doubt will be welcomed by many. There is still much concern about especially violent crime, including armed robberies, on the island and the presence of more "blue in the street" should help provide a greater feeling of safety and security.

The minister had said earlier that the officers would not come for the holiday period as they did last year despite an earlier agreement with local authorities because the local police were not too keen on receiving them and wanted to do the job themselves. Both Commissioner Roy Marlin and this newspaper strongly criticised that decision.

Not only was an agreement made, but not sending the additional help because of apparent objections within the Police Force is questionable at best, as the minister is the one who is in charge and politically responsible, with a sworn obligation to serve in the first place the general interest of the Netherlands Antilles, including St. Maarten and its people, not just of the local Police Force and its members.

The minister apparently has reconsidered and the additional police are coming after all, although no fixed date or numbers have yet been given. Just as the criticism of his original announcement that the assistance would no longer be provided was warranted, he now deserves to be commended for taking the correct decision in the end. Other good law enforcement news is the decision to install at least one surveillance camera in the busy St. Peters/South Reward school district. With so many students of different schools and other youngsters converging in the area on a daily basis there have been too many incidents involving the use of violence and/or criminal behaviour.

While not part of the original three-month pilot project for camera surveillance in Philipsburg approved by the Island Council, the entities involved apparently are able to fit it in without exceeding the approved budget. The need to be very careful with the use of the cameras and their footage in connection with privacy issues cannot be emphasised enough, especially when it concerns minors, but there is every reason to believe it will prove a useful tool to monitor any undesirable activity around many of the island's schools and hopefully will act as a deterrent as well. □

Curaçao insists court stays put

WILLEMSTAD--The seat of the future Court of justice of the Kingdom countries in the Caribbean must remain in Curaçao. This is the position of the Island Territory of Curaçao, Commissioner Zita Jesus-Leito of General Affairs (PAR) confirmed, during a press conference.

There is currently an impasse regarding the future seat of the Joint Court of Justice for Curaçao, Aruba, St. Maarten, and Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba. In the draft consensus, Kingdom law of Joint Court of Justice that was handled in the Island Council on Friday stated that the seat of the Court will be in Curaçao.

Aruba has resisted this law, stating that it will not approve the law. The argument was that the Country Aruba is in existence much longer

than the new countries in the Kingdom and must therefore receive the seat.

According to Jesus-Leito, Curaçao insisted that the seat of the Common Court of Justice for Curaçao, Aruba, St. Maarten and the BES Islands (Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba) remains in Curaçao.

"Considering the fact that the current court is seated in Curaçao for years already and that through the years we have built up the infrastructure and personnel, and also the Prosecutor is established here, we think that it is best for the Court to remain here in Curaçao. We firmly back this position, the commissioner said, stating that it is not expected to put a stop to the current constitutional change process. "We do not consider this an issue," she said. □

Tax Cuts Aren't Off Obama's Table

By Jane Sasseen and Phil Mintz

As the economy heads deeper into a recessionary abyss, business tax cut ideas that seemed to be nonstarters just a few short months ago are suddenly back on the table. Take the incoming Obama Administration's embrace of a measure that would lengthen the period for money-losing companies to write off net operating losses against profits from the current two years to four or five years.

The proposal, floated on Dec. 5 following a meeting between Obama and congressional leaders, was originally discussed last spring when the Bush Administration assembled a stimulus package. (The idea was modeled after a similar measure enacted after the September 11 terrorist

attacks.) But the provision was viewed as a giant giveaway to banks and money-losing homebuilders and it was scrapped from the package.

Quick Cash

Now, with the incoming Administration looking to pump something close to \$1 trillion into the economy, business and personal tax cuts of as much as \$300 billion - with perhaps \$100 billion aimed at business -- are seen as quick ways to inject money. While infrastructure spending is getting a lot of attention, business groups note that this stimulus can go only so far. Aric Newhouse, senior vice-president for policy and government relations for the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), said that he has heard projections of stimulus spending reaching

\$1.3 trillion over two years. "The idea of spending \$1.3 trillion--it's hard to think about how you would spend that all on infrastructure alone," he says. "The last highway bill was about \$270 billion for all highway projects, for five years total." The business tax cuts would get strong political and business support -- in particular, the net operating loss provision is favored by Max Baucus (D-Mont.), chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. Other business tax cuts Obama is considering would extend so-called bonus depreciation, which allows profitable companies to write off investments more quickly, and give companies that hire new workers a one-year tax credit at a total cost of \$40 billion to \$50 billion over two years. □



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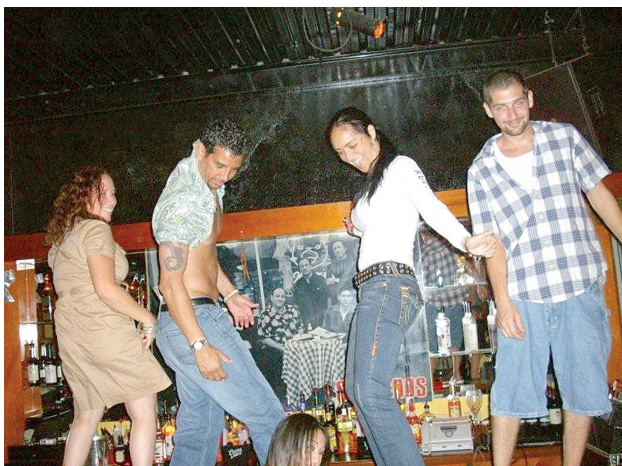
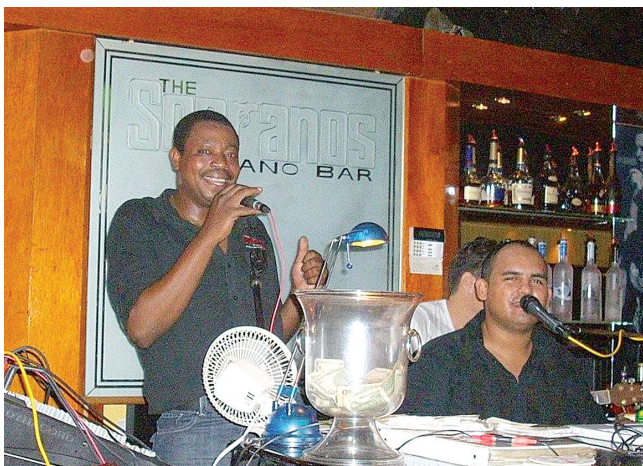
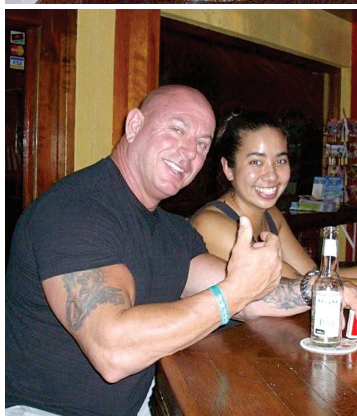


PALM BEACH — Soprano's is known for their great atmosphere and their Martini's. Every night a piano player entertains the gathered patrons with singalong songs, requests and hits.

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cuts of sizzling beef, pork, lamb, sausage, and poultry. The meats are prepared in the healthiest style of cooking—slow roasting—where much of the fat drips off in the roasting process, so those looking for a lower fat option to sautéing, pan frying, or deep frying will also be able to indulge. The Brazilian-style steakhouse also offers up a gar-

den full of healthy eats on a lavish 40-item seasonal salad bar, giving dieters plenty to choose from to accompany the slow-roasted meats. A selection of fresh lettuces and vegetables may be standard for most salad bars, but **Texas de Brazil's** version goes a gourmet twist further, treating the palate to additional items like marinated portabella mushrooms, sweet roasted bell peppers, hearts of palm, sundried tomatoes, imported cheeses—including fresh buffalo mozzarella—sushi, homemade soups, and much more. The salad bar is included in the continuous service meal with unlimited choices from the grilled meats, but for vegetarians or the non-meat eaters, a special price is offered for just the salad bar. Of course, for those looking to

splurge while on vacation, **Texas de Brazil** will gladly serve their garlic mashed potatoes, traditional fried plantains, and their world-famous parmesan cheese bread as part of the meal.

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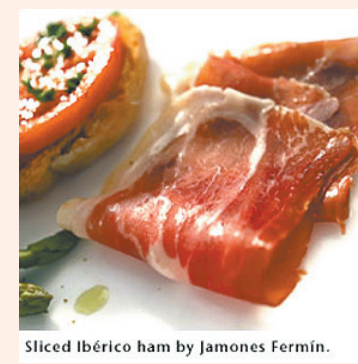
highest quality ham. The flavor and texture of the ham is the only one of its kind and the experience of the chef carving your personal slice is irreplaceable. The menu varies with a wide array of Italian dishes including a Sicilian-style thin crust pizza dripping with cheese, fresh-made tomato sauce and a variety of toppings in the meat, seafood and veggie categories. The menu doesn't stop there as Casa Tua features incredible appetizers including shrimp bruschetta, fresh marinated seafood, escargots, amazing

salads, homemade soups starting at \$6 and authentic Italian lasagnas & pastas starting at just \$14. The staff at this popular eatery has set the standard on the island for the term "great service" not only with your dining pleasure, but recognized as 'the' professionals in assisting guests with the perfect cocktail, paired wine or other beverages. After just one dinner at Casa Tua, you'll know your home in this family owned eatery. Victor Nataf and his sons Daveed and Gregory are always there to welcome you with the rest of



their staff. Gregory spends most of his time in the kitchen as the head chef repeating the recipes and perfect preparations passed to him from his uncle and three siblings who are renowned for their Mediterranean flair throughout France. Of course we saved the best for last as no one does an ending better than Casa Tua with their dreamy Tiramisu, or Profiteroles au Chocolat Chaud. The best part about such a good ending is that it guarantees you'll be back for more...

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President-elect Barack Obama arrives to speak about the economy, Thursday, Jan. 8, 2009, at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va.

Associated Press

Democrats criticize Obama's proposed tax cuts

By STEPHEN OHLEMACHER

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — President-elect Barack Obama's proposed tax cuts ran into opposition Thursday from senators in his own party who said they wouldn't do much to stimulate the economy or create jobs. Senators from both parties agreed that Congress should do something to stimulate the economy. But Democratic senators emerging from a private meeting of the Senate Finance Committee criticized business and individual tax cuts in Obama's stimulus plan.

They were especially critical of a proposed \$3,000 tax credit for companies that hire or retrain workers.

"If I'm a business person, it's unlikely if you give me a several-thousand-dollar credit that I'm going to hire people if I can't sell the products they're producing," said Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., a member of the committee. "That to me is just misdirected," Conrad said.

Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., said, "I'd rather spend the money on the infrastructure, on direct investment, on energy conversion, on other kinds of things that much more directly, much more rapidly and much more certainly create a real job."

The cost of the economic rescue package Obama wants is expected to swell to \$800 billion or more. About \$300 billion of Obama's

package would be for tax cuts or refunds for individuals and businesses.

One tax provision would provide a \$500 tax cut for most workers and \$1,000 for couples, at a cost of about \$140 billion to \$150 billion over two years. The individual tax cuts may be awarded through withholding less from worker paychecks, effectively making them about \$10 to \$20 larger each week.

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said he doubted that a modest tax cut would change consumers' spending habits.

"In tough times people don't respond all that well to marginal changes, such as a small amount of money added per paycheck," Wyden said.

Democratic Sen. Max Baucus of Montana, chairman of the Finance Committee, said he hopes to schedule a committee vote on the stimulus package in about two weeks, which would coincide with the week of Obama's inauguration. Many senators still hope to approve a package by mid-February.

There is "general agreement that because of the recession we've got to move, we've got to move quickly, very quickly," Baucus said.

He added that it is too early to pass judgment on any aspect of Obama's plan.

"This is an early part of this whole process. A lot of preliminary questions are going to be asked," Baucus said. □

Committee recommends impeaching Ill. Governor



Illinois Rep. Roger L. Eddy, R-Hutsonville, right, studies supplied documents requested during testimony at a Illinois House Impeachment Committee hearing at the Illinois State Capitol in Springfield, Ill., Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2009. By naming Roland Burris to the Senate, Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich has tied Washington in knots and diverted attention from his own problems. But he didn't make those problems go away.

Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — A key panel unanimously recommended Thursday that Gov. Rod Blagojevich be impeached for abusing his power, mismanaging Illinois government and committing possible criminal acts.

The House could vote as early as Friday on whether to make Blagojevich the first governor impeached in the long, sordid history of Illinois politics. Impeachment in the House would trigger a Senate trial to decide whether the second-term Democrat should be removed from office.

Continued on Page B4



UN halts Gaza aid after Israel attack on workers

By ARTHUR MAX and IBRAHIM BARZAK

Associated Press Writers

JERUSALEM — The U.N. suspended food deliveries to Gaza and the Red Cross accused Israel of blocking medical assistance after forces fired on aid workers, killing two, as the threat of a wider conflict emerged with Lebanon.

Continued on Page B6

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Congress officially declares Obama next president



Vice President Dick Cheney accompanied by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of Calif., bangs the gavel at the conclusion of the counting of the Electoral College votes, Thursday, Jan. 8, 2009, during a joint session of Congress.

By JIM ABRAMS

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Barack Obama is officially the next president of the United States, Congress declared Thursday in fulfilling its centuries-old constitutional duty to certify and tally the electoral college vote from each state.

Republicans joined Democrats in a standing ovation as Vice President

Dick Cheney, in his role as speaker of the Senate, announced from the podium that Obama had achieved a majority of votes and would be the 44th president on Jan. 20.

Speaking before a joint session of the House and Senate, Cheney confirmed the results of the Nov. 4 election, that Obama and next Vice President Joe Biden had received 365 electoral votes while the Republican ticket of John

McCain and Sarah Palin garnered 173 votes.

"Pursuant to the Constitution and laws of the United States, the Senate and House of Representatives are meeting in joint session to verify the certificates and count the votes of the electors of the several states," Cheney intoned in opening up the session.

Four "tellers," two members each from the House and Senate, then commenced reading off the votes from each state. Ironically, the first four states read in alphabetical order — Alabama, Alaska, Arizona and Arkansas — all gave their votes to McCain and Palin.

A cheer went up when the next state, California, gave its 55 votes to Obama and Biden. Another note of levity in the otherwise formal and scripted ceremony came as teller Rep. Robert Brady, D-Pa., brought forth some laughs when he read out that the vote from Ohio, a focus of voter disputes in recent elections, "appears to be regular in form and authentic."

Cheney led a Senate delegation into the House chamber along with teenage pages carrying two mahogany boxes containing the certified vote totals of each state.

He sat on the podium next to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, carrying out what could be his last act as president of the Senate. He handed the certificates from each state's electors to the four tellers to be read off and tallied.

The reading took about 30 minutes.

At the conclusion of the state-by-state rundown, Cheney read the tally sheet and announced the results — that Obama has been elected president and Biden will succeed Cheney as vice

president.

The 12th Amendment, ratified in 1804, directs the electors chosen by the states to meet and vote for president and vice president, conveying the results to the president of the Senate.

That was accomplished Dec. 15, when the electors, in a largely ceremonial rite preordained by Obama's Nov. 4 victory over McCain, gathered in state capitals to cast their votes. As on Thursday, the tally was 365 for Obama, 173 for McCain.

The electoral college is made up of 538 electors, with each state getting its equivalent in the 435-member House and the 100-member Senate. The District of Columbia gets the other three electors.

The session this year was drama-free, unlike in 2001, when then-Vice President Al Gore presided over the session that declared George W. Bush the winner over Gore in a disputed election. Gore disallowed objections from fellow Democrats who asserted that Bush had unfairly won Florida and tried to block Florida's electoral votes from being counted.

Florida's Democratic senator, Bill Nelson, on Thursday pointed to the 2000 election, when Gore received more popular votes than Bush nationwide, in proposing a constitutional amendment to abolish the Electoral College in favor of direct popular votes. He said the current system permits a candidate with fewer votes nationally to win the presidency by capturing narrow victories in big states.

Nelson and others have made similar proposals in past sessions of Congress without success. □



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Mumbai attacks seen as model for future terrorism

By DEVLIN BARRETT

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON – The deadly attacks in India may have provided a low-frills but bloody blueprint for other violent groups to follow, U.S. anti-terrorism officials told Congress on Thursday. The FBI's chief intelligence officer told a Senate hearing that the November siege showed that well-trained assailants with simple weaponry can cause massive casualties.

"I think we can expect that groups will look to that as a model for themselves," Donald Van Duyn said at the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs hearing. "We sometimes focus on tactics that may be exotic and esoteric ... but for most terrorists, they're looking for what works."

His counterpart at the Homeland

Security Department, Charles Allen, told senators that "the sheer brutality of this attack, I believe, is the kind of thing that can be conducted against soft targets around the world."

The attacks in Mumbai, India's financial capital, left 164 dead and nearly 300 more wounded. Lawmakers held the hearing to discuss lessons learned from the ordeal.

Van Duyn said that as much as governments worry about chemical, biological, or radiological attacks, what happened in India may encourage terrorists to launch low-tech violence. In Mumbai, 10 gunmen with handheld rifles and explosives were able to keep police at bay for nearly three days.

India says the gunmen were all Pakistani and has blamed a Pakistani-based militant group, Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Allen said he was concerned

that U.S. shopping malls develop effective evacuation plans. "This kind of attack, I think we have to be prepared for it and be prepared for soft targets to be attacked," Allen said.

Also testifying was New York City's police commissioner, Ray Kelly, who warned of the other simple tool used to deadly effect in Mumbai: cell phones.

According to phone transcripts, the attackers received instructions and real-time updates about the officers amassing against them. Some of the phones they used for the calls apparently were taken from the hostages.

That information, investigators believe, helped make the attack much more deadly as the gunman delayed capture.

Kelly said his department is examining ways it might be able to shut down cell phone

Diocese seeks \$20M from breakaway Episcopalians

PITTSBURGH—Episcopal leaders in Pittsburgh went to court Thursday seeking to recover \$20 million in assets they believe were wrongfully taken when the conservative branches split from the liberal diocese in October.

The Diocese of Pittsburgh, which oversees the 20 local parishes that stayed with the U.S. Episcopal Church, said the breakaway group has no legal right to the assets since it is no longer part of the denomination.

Spokesman Rich Creehan said the church petitioned the Court of Common Pleas for the assets after its requests for them were "ignored" by the breakaway parishes.

The breakaway conservatives, who also call themselves the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh, said they have a right to some of the assets because they helped develop them before the split.

"We would love to sit down and work out a mediated division where everyone involved has access to a portion of the assets because we think that's fair," said the Rev. Peter Frank, a spokesman for the conservative diocese.

The break was led by former Episcopal Bishop Robert Duncan, a theological conservative who had long been angered by the liberal direction of the national church. He said he had to split from denominational leaders after Episcopalians in 2003 consecrated the first openly gay bishop, V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire. Fifty conservative Episcopal parishes in Pittsburgh left with Duncan.

The assets at stake include diocesan endowments and bank accounts, along with insurance, mailing lists and databases, said Creehan. The legal claim does not cover buildings or land.

The case centers on interpretation of a 2005 court order that was issued during earlier litigation between one local parish, Calvary Episcopal Church, and the diocese then led by Duncan. That order states that property held or administered by the local diocese of "the Episcopal Church of the United States of America ... shall continue to be so held or administered by the diocese regardless of whether some or even a majority of the parishes" break from the national denomination. □



In this Dec. 3, 2008 file photo, Homeland Security Secretary-designate Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano, left, speaks as Vice President-elect Joe Biden, center, is briefed by Jim Talent, co-chair Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism, right, and others, at the presidential transition headquarters in Washington.

Associated Press

calls in and around future hostage-taking scenarios, without also shutting down the communications devices of the police trying to rescue them.

With President-elect Barack Obama's set to take the oath of office on Jan. 20, U.S. intelligence officials said they know of no specific threats to the upcoming inauguration. But they are concerned about

the potential for a Mumbai-type attack.

"A group of well-armed terrorists, likely equipped with automatic weapons and explosives, could assault their target forcibly with the intention of taking hostages," according to a joint FBI and Homeland Security intelligence assessment Wednesday that was obtained by The Associated Press. □

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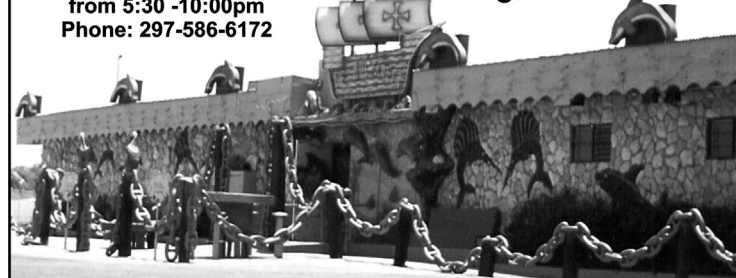


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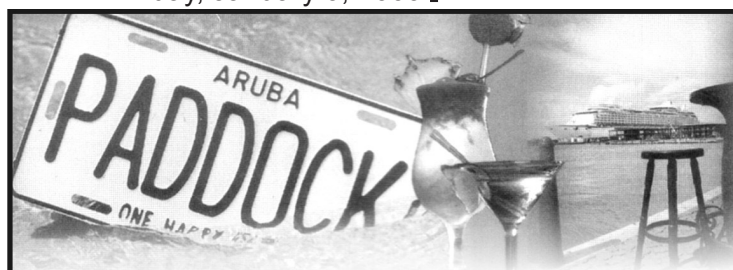
Buccaneer Restaurant is an island tradition for over 25 years that serve creative dishes prepared with a European touch with irresistible secret flavorings which continue to lure guests back, again and again. *Feast on fresh Caribbean catch in one of the cozy booths with a view of an aquarium at each seat, surrounded by tropical splendor and nautical decor. Our second dining room resembles an underwater cave, complete with a 7,500 gallon saltwater aquarium, unseen elsewhere. Our friendly staff is here to give you the "Welcome Aboard" feeling and the chef-owner will personally take care of you.*

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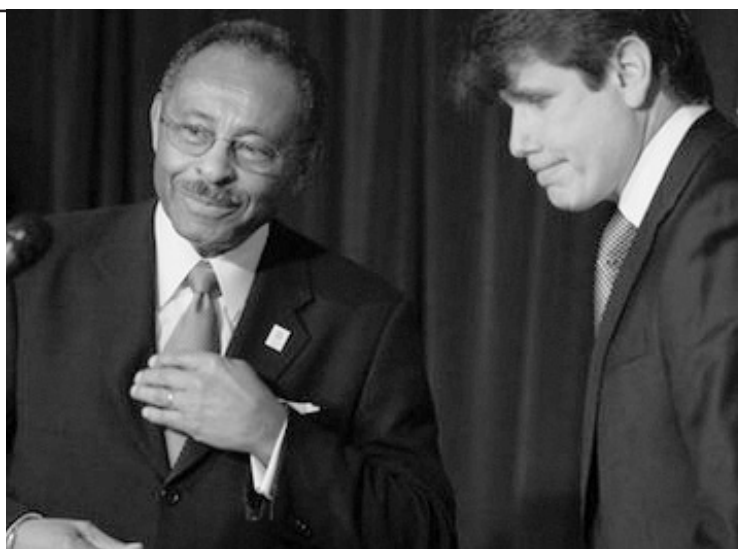
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Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich announces his choice of former Ill. Attorney General Roland Burris to fill President-elect Barack Obama's U.S. Senate seat Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2008, in Chicago.

Associated Press

IMPEACHING

Continued from Page B1

Many on the 21-member special committee called it a sad day for Illinois, but Rep. Bill Black disagreed.

"I think this is a good, glad, happy day for Illinois because it points out that nobody is above the law," said Black, a Republican. "There have been egregious abuses if half of what we read is true."

Blagojevich has denied any wrongdoing. Spokesman Lucio Guerrero didn't immediately comment on the impeachment recommendation, but said there was no chance the governor would resign before the full House decision. Blagojevich's

attorneys left the hearing before the committee vote.

"The citizens of this state must have confidence that their governor will faithfully serve the people and put their interests before his own," the committee report said. "It is with profound regret that the committee finds that our current governor has not done so."

Blagojevich was arrested Dec. 9 on federal charges that include allegations he schemed to profit from his power to name President-elect Barack Obama's replacement in the Senate.

He later appointed Roland Burris to fill the Senate seat,

and Burris testified Thursday that he did not make a deal with the governor to win the plum position.

While the governor maintains his innocence, the report notes he did not appear before the committee to explain himself. "The committee is entitled to balance his complete silence against sworn testimony from a federal agent," it says.

The committee's report recounts the federal charges, relying on a sworn affidavit from an FBI agent describing tape-recorded conversations in which Blagojevich discussed using the seat to land a job for himself or his wife. The governor also is quoted on the need to hide any evidence of a trade-off.

"The committee believes that this information is sufficiently credible to demonstrate an abuse of office of the highest magnitude," the report says.

It also lays out allegations separate from the criminal charges — that Blagojevich expanded a health care program without proper authority, that he circumvented hiring laws to give jobs to political allies, that he spent millions of dollars on foreign flu vaccine that he knew wasn't needed and couldn't be brought into the country. □

LA judge hears bid to dismiss MySpace conviction

By GREG RISLING

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — An attorney for a woman convicted in a MySpace hoax directed at a teen who ended up committing suicide asked a judge to dismiss her convictions Thursday, saying a computer-fraud law was improperly used to prosecute her.

U.S. District Court Judge George Wu did not immediately rule after oral arguments and will likely issue a written decision, although he didn't indicate when. He did set an April 30 sentencing date for Lori Drew, who was not present.

Drew was found guilty in November of three misdemeanor counts of accessing computers without authorization. Prosecutors said the Missouri woman violated MySpace service rules by helping create a fictitious teen boy on the social networking site and sent flirtatious messages from him to 13-year-old neighbor Megan Meier, a former friend of Drew's daughter. The fake boy then dumped Megan in a message saying the world would be better without her. She soon hanged herself.

The case hinged on an unprecedented application of computer-fraud law. Drew was not directly charged with causing Megan's death, but she was indicted under the federal

Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, which in the past has been used in hacking and trademark theft cases. Defense attorney Orin Kerr argued that it's not a crime to violate a Web site's service terms under current law.

"The question here is: What is the proper reading of the statute?" asked Kerr. "Reading the law, there is insufficient evidence to find someone guilty of a misdemeanor."

If Wu grants the defense motion, he would set aside the jury's verdict and enter a judgment of acquittal.

Reached by phone Thursday in Missouri, Megan's mother, Tina Meier, said it would "absolutely be horrendous for all parties involved and a huge disservice to the jurors" to dismiss the conviction.

"It's been a long road, and the judge has had plenty of time to make decisions before now," Meier said. Jurors found Drew was not guilty of the more serious felonies of intentionally causing emotional harm while accessing computers without authorization and couldn't reach a unanimous verdict on a felony conspiracy charge.

Prosecutors want Wu to dismiss the conspiracy charge "in the interests of justice," according to court documents, but didn't elaborate. The judge did not make a decision. □

Firefighters near containment of Colo. wildfire

By DAN ELLIOTT
Associated Press Writers
BOULDER, Colo. — Thousands of evacuated residents, including former FEMA chief Michael D. Brown, were allowed to return to their homes Thursday after firefighters partially contained a wildfire near Denver that destroyed two houses and several outbuildings.

Brown told The Associated Press that his house was spared, but he watched firefighters battle the blaze about a half-mile from his home. Crews expected to fully contain the 3,700-acre fire zone about 25 miles northwest of Denver by Thursday night. The fire blackened mostly grassland north and west of the city of Boulder, an area of scattered subdivisions, farms and ranches along the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

"I'm shaking and I'm so grateful we have our homes and our pets," said Darlene Steiner, as she inspected her home north of Boulder following an overnight evacuation that affected an estimated 3,000 people. Steiner walked arm-in-arm with a friend, checking on neighbors and gazing at the burned landscape.

At least 1,300 homes were evacuated and two were destroyed, county Sheriff's Cmdr. Phil West said. The evacuation order was lifted Thursday evening.

West estimated that within the 3,700-acre fire zone, about 1,400 acres had actually burned.

Two firefighters and a police officer sustained minor injuries.

"The fact that no one was killed or seriously injured and the fact that we lost two homes in a wind-driven event like this is miraculous," Sheriff Joe Pelle said. "The effort to suppress this wildfire once the winds died down last night was exhausting and downright heroic."

Garry Brieze, the Denver-based regional director for FEMA, also credited years of work to protect neighborhoods by outlawing wood shingles and encouraging homeowners to keep flammable landscaping away from their homes.

"It was an overnight miracle that was 15 years in the making," said Brieze, a former president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

Some 200 firefighters spent the night lighting backfires

to starve the blaze. They saved several homes from destruction, Pelle said.

The cause of the fire, which started Wednesday, was under investigation, though officials believed wind gusts reaching 80 mph likely downed power lines.

A broad swath of the foothills was charred Thursday, and some wind gusts kicked up as the sun rose.

Brown said he was prepared with a "go kit" stuffed with medication and cash that was left over from his FEMA tenure when he was called out on disasters. He was director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency from 2003 until he resigned amid criticism after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

"We never think of the fact that something like this can happen," Brown said. "One minute I'm sitting in my office and the next there is a deputy in my driveway telling me I have to leave."

Christy Cramer, a horse trainer, spent six hours Wednesday evacuating 42



Bobra Goldsmith, 78, surveys the remnants of her home on Thursday, Jan. 8, 2009, which was destroyed after a utility pole toppled sparking the first of three fires in rural Boulder County, Colo. Thousands of residents returned to their homes Thursday, thankful that an erratic, fast-moving wildfire fanned by high winds in Boulder County spared all but two homes. Crews made steady progress encircling the blaze and called the lack of casualties and significant property damage nothing short of a miracle.

Associated Press

horses from the Joder Ranch. "I called all of my friends with big horse trailers," Cramer said. "The flames were right next to my truck. It was very, very, very scary."

Seven horses were found safe at the ranch Thursday, including one standing in a burned pen, Cramer said. Neighbors helped Bobra Goldsmith, 78, round up

more than 160 llamas and alpacas on her Rocky Mountain Llamas ranch. The retired University of Colorado professor lost her house in the fire.

"My mother was an artist," Goldsmith told the Daily Camera newspaper. "The house was filled with her work. I can't tell you what I've lost." □

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Palestinian demonstrators use sling-shots to hurl stones at Israeli soldiers during a demonstration against Israel's military operation in Gaza, in the West Bank village of Bilin, near Ramallah, Thursday, Jan. 8, 2009. Israel resumed its Gaza offensive Wednesday after a three-hour lull to allow delivery of humanitarian aid, bombing heavily around suspected smuggling tunnels near the border with Egypt. Despite the heavy fighting, strides appeared to be being made on the diplomatic front with the U.S. throwing its weight behind a deal being brokered by France and Egypt.

Associated Press

GAZA

Continued from Page B1

With violence unabated in Gaza, key Arab nations and Western powers reached an agreement Thursday on the main elements of a U.N. resolution calling for an immediate and durable cease-fire between the two sides. It must still be voted on by the

U.N. Security Council.

Israel and Hamas are not party to the agreement and it will be up to them to stop their military activities. But the resolution — which would allow for the opening of border crossings to Gaza — was supported by the United States, Israel's closest ally, and Arab nations which have close ties to Hamas.

Militants in Lebanon fired several Katyusha rockets into northern Israel early Thursday, including one that tore through the roof of a nursing home and injured two people. Israel responded swiftly raising the possibility of a two-front conflict.

About 750 Palestinians and 12 Israelis have died in the 13 days of fighting in Gaza, an assault launched by Israel in an attempt to halt rocket fire from the territory, which is controlled by the militant group Hamas.

The conflict has left hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza increasingly desperate for food, water, fuel and medical assistance, and the situation was expected to worsen as humanitarian efforts fall victim to the fighting.

Simon Horner, of the European Commission aid department, said 60 percent of Gaza's 1.4 million people have no electricity, and fewer people every day have access to clean water. The sewage system is in danger of a failing, which could lead to an outbreak of

disease, and medical services were under severe stress.

"The inability of the U.N. to provide assistance in this worsening humanitarian crisis is unacceptable," said Michele Montas, a U.N. spokeswoman.

She said according to reports, the attack on the U.N. truck, which killed two Palestinian workers, took place during a three-hour humanitarian lull announced by the Israel Defense Force. Four U.N. Relief and Works Agency local staff have been killed in the conflict.

In Geneva, the International Committee of the Red Cross said it would restrict aid operations to Gaza City for at least one day after one of its convoys came under Israeli fire at the Netzarim crossing during the three-hour lull in fighting Thursday. One driver was lightly injured.

The World Health Organization said 21 Palestinian medical workers have been killed and 30 more injured since Israel began its offensive.

The Israeli military said in a statement that it cooperates closely with foreign aid groups to help civilians, and said Hamas uses civilians as human shields.

The international Red Cross also accused Israel of hindering rescuers from reaching areas devastated in the battles. Ambulances could not get to the Zeitoun neighborhood for four days because the Israelis had blocked access with large earthen barriers, officials said. When they were allowed in Wednesday, the rescuers "found four small children next to their dead mothers in one of the houses. They were too weak to stand up on their own. One man was also found alive, too weak to stand up," the ICRC said in a rare public statement. "In all, there were at least 12 corpses lying on mattresses" in one of the

houses.

During the lull in fighting Thursday, Palestinian health officials dug out 35 bodies from several areas around Gaza that had been engulfed by battles or struck by Israeli air attacks since Israel launched its offensive against Hamas, said Moaiya Hassanain of the Palestinian Health Ministry.

At least 24 Palestinians were killed in Gaza on Thursday, including three elderly people fleeing their home, according to Hassanain. He estimated the death toll around 750, and U.N. officials say about half were civilians.

Two Israeli soldiers were killed in combat, raising the number of soldiers killed in Gaza to 10. Four Israelis, including one soldier, also have been killed by rockets fired at Israeli cities.

Gaza militants unleashed 24 missiles at southern Israel on Thursday, wounding four people.

Egyptian-led diplomatic cease-fire efforts showed no immediate breakthroughs. Israeli representatives concluded talks in Cairo and returned home, one day after Hamas leaders reviewed the French-Egyptian plan that might offer a role in Gaza to the rival Palestinian Authority.

Israel's government said Wednesday it viewed the proposal positively, but only if it guaranteed a halt to rocket fire on Israeli territory from Gaza and ensured Hamas cannot rearm. A Hamas official said the Islamic militant group was not ready to either accept or reject the plan.

But Mohammed Nazzal, a member of Hamas' Damascus-based political leadership, said, "We will never raise the white banner. I believe there are going to be fierce battles and the resistance factions will fight house to house, street to street and neighborhood to neighborhood." □

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Congo rebel faction denounces Nkunda as leader

By EDDY ISANGO

Associated Press Writer

KINSHASA, Congo — Rebels led by a high-ranking commander in eastern Congo denounced the authority of founding leader Laurent Nkunda on Thursday, signaling a split in the movement just as it is holding talks with the Congolese government.

A group of rebels headed by Bosco Ntaganda, the movement's chief of staff, claim they have dismissed Nkunda from his duties as leader of the National Council for the Defense of the People, or CNDP. But Nkunda's spokesman said he remains in charge and that the dissidents would face a disciplinary commission.

"The new leadership no longer recognizes Nkunda as chief of the CNDP because he is known for the bad management of the movement," Desire Kamanzi, a spokesman named by Ntaganda, told The Associated Press by phone from the village of Kibati.

However, Nkunda's spokesman, Bertrand Bisimwa, dismissed the allegations, calling it a "huge deception and a blatant indiscipline that would not go without punishment."

Years of sporadic violence in eastern Congo intensified in August, when fighting heated up

between the army and fighters loyal to Nkunda. More than 250,000 people have been driven from their homes in the violence and some 17,000 U.N. peacekeepers have not been able to quell the chaos.

Nkunda, an ethnic Tutsi, says his rebels are fighting to protect Congo's minority Tutsis from the Hutu militia that fled here after helping perpetrate the 1994 genocide that killed more than half a million Tutsis in Rwanda. But his critics contend he is more interested in power and Congo's mineral wealth.

Some fear the current crisis could once again draw in neighboring countries. Congo's devastating 1998-2002 war split the vast nation into rival fiefdoms and involved half a dozen African armies.

The rebels and representatives of the Congolese government began meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, again Wednesday to try to broker a solution to the latest outbreak of fighting. The last round of talks stalled in December.

But Kamanzi said the group opposed to Nkunda's leadership could not accept the representative in Nairobi for the talks because the person had been nominated by Nkunda without consulting the movement. □



Congo Government delegation during the opening of the Congo conference in Nairobi, Kenya, Wednesday, Jan. 7 2009. A top mediator at U.N.-backed talks for war-battered eastern Congo is urging a truce. Former Tanzanian president Benjamin Mkapa said Wednesday that rebel and government forces must agree to stop fighting. Years of low-level clashes intensified when rebel leader Laurent Nkunda launched an offensive Aug. 28, with more than 250,000 people driven from their homes in the violence. Some 17,000 U.N. peacekeepers have not been able to quell the chaos.

Associated Press

At least two die during climb on Argentine peak

By MAYRA PERTOSSA

Associated Press Writer

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina — An Italian climber and an Argentine guide both died when a storm trapped five mountaineers just below the summit of the highest peak in the Americas, an Italian diplomat said Thursday. The three others survived.

Rescuers reached the alpinists and their guide near the peak, at 22,000 feet, according to Italian consular official Giorgio Giacomello. The deaths were confirmed by the Italian consul in the city of Mendoza, Pietro Tombaccini, who spoke to The Associated Press by telephone.

Tombaccini identified the victims as an Italian woman and an Argentine male guide and the survivors as two Italian men and one Italian woman.

He did not reveal their names.

The survivors and about 50 rescuers were descending Aconcagua, making communication difficult.

The group was expected to arrive at the Condor's Nest base camp, at about 16,400 feet, by Friday afternoon and then take helicopters

off the mountain, weather permitting.

The survivors "are walking by themselves," Tombaccini said. "That is a good sign."

Guido Loza, director of the Department of Natural Resources for Mendoza province, said the rescuers gave the survivors warm clothing and liquids before helping them trek back up the peak for a descent on an easier route.

Loza said the climbers reached the summit Wednesday only to be hit by an afternoon blizzard common for this time of year. The storm caused temperatures to drop to zero degrees Fahrenheit and reduced visibility to 33 feet (10 meters).

The party apparently lost its way and began descending the east face of the mountain, according to Loza. The guide sent out a distress signal, but rescue crews were delayed by the storm.

A sixth member of the group, Italian Antonella Targa, 50, had descended earlier Wednesday with a guide and avoided the storm, he said.

Aconcagua is the highest mountain in the Western Hemisphere at 22,841 feet (6,962 meters). □

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is out of this world, whether dining inside in the relaxed air-conditioned dining room or outside on the terrace to enjoy the tropical



breeze and daily live music. Most guests come in early for the **daily fresh catches**, such as Red snapper, grouper, mahi mahi, wahoo and tuna. Check with the server to find out about the Catch of the day.

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Every Wednesday, seafood specials are prepared depending on what the Fishermen bring in fresh out of the water that afternoon. These specials usually include fresh Caribbean lobster and pounds of peeled shrimps. Fishes and More is for everyone, from large groups, families, couples

and even singles who can't shake the seafood addiction can stop in for a fix of Pina Colada Shrimp.

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SPORTS

Aruba TODAY



In this April 27, 2008 file photo, Atlanta Braves' John Smoltz delivers a pitch in the second inning against the New York Mets in their baseball game at Shea Stadium in New York.

Associated Press

Nadal loses, Federer advances at Qatar Open

DOHA, Qatar — Top-ranked Rafael Nadal was eliminated from the Qatar Open on Thursday, while Roger Federer advanced to the semifinals of the tuneup for the Australian Open.

Nadal lost to Gael Monfils of France 6-4, 6-4, and Federer saved three set points to defeat Philipp Kohlschreiber of Germany 6-2, 7-6 (6). The Swiss star trailed 5-1 and 6-3 in the tiebreaker, reeling off five straight points to win.

"I had a strong finish," Federer said. "I am not thinking ahead. I want to win the title."

Federer will face Andy Murray, who defeated Sergiy Stakhovsky of Ukraine 6-4, 6-2.

Nadal, who cruised through his first two matches of the season-opening event, was broken twice in the first set and once in the second. He finished with only 10 winners, while Monfils had 35.

"Today wasn't my day," Nadal said. "Monfils served really well. If he wants to improve his ranking, he will have to play like he did today. I knew it won't be easy at the start

of the season, but I am happy with my game."

The 14th-ranked Frenchman had eight aces to none for Nadal. Monfils, who reached the 2006 Qatar Open final, is playing as a wild card.

"I had an almost perfect start to the match and I played well on most points," Monfils said. "I didn't allow him to settle down."

Monfils will play Andy Roddick in the semifinals. The eighth-ranked American defeated unseeded Victor Hanesescu of Romania 6-3, 6-2. "I feel good right now," Roddick said. "I am keeping it pretty tight on the court. The drop shots helped a lot. I guess it helps to have those things worked on during the offseason."

Roddick's serve also worked, finishing with 13 aces.

Last week, Nadal lost to Murray in the final at an exhibition tournament in the United Arab Emirates.

"Maybe I need more time on court," Nadal said.

"I played two matches in Abu Dhabi and three here, which is good, but I need more

AP source: Smoltz agrees to deal with Red Sox

By PAUL NEWBERRY
AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA — After more than two decades with the Atlanta Braves, John Smoltz is likely to finish his stellar career wearing a different uniform. In a stunning end to one of baseball's longest runs, Smoltz reached preliminary agreement on a contract with the Boston Red Sox after failing to work out a deal to return for his 22nd season with the Braves.

A person familiar with the negotiations, speaking on condition of anonymity because

the final paperwork had not been completed, said Smoltz will sign a guaranteed deal with the Red Sox worth about \$5 million and also have the possibility to earn another \$5 million in performance bonuses. The deal was expected to be finalized later Thursday.

Smoltz issued a statement through his agent and said he had little choice except to talk with other teams after hearing what the Braves planned to offer. "I was going to withhold comment until the announcement of my signing with a new team, but I now feel the need to clear up any misconceptions and inaccuracies about the contract negotiations between myself and the Atlanta Braves," he said. "There were large discrepancies between the offer from the Braves and offers from other teams."

The Red Sox also agreed to a one-year contract with outfielder Rocco Baldelli, but clearly the deal with Smoltz is the biggest splash yet for a team that lost to Tampa Bay in the AL championship series and is looking to keep pace with the rival Yankees, who've doled out \$423.5 million in contracts to three players after missing the playoffs last season.

Smoltz, the only pitcher in baseball history with 200 wins and 150 saves, had pitched for the Braves since 1988. The 41-year-old is coming off major shoulder surgery that sidelined him for most of last season, but feels healthy enough to pitch at least one more year.

If able to come back, he'll likely join a rotation that already includes Daisuke Matsuzaka (18-3), Jon Lester (16-6), Josh Beckett (12-10) and another newcomer, two-time All-Star Brad Penny. Smoltz prefers to finish his career as a starter. Smoltz's decision is a startling development given repeated statements that he wanted to spend his entire big-league

tenure in Atlanta. He was an unknown minor leaguer when acquired from Detroit in 1987 for Doyle Alexander, but went on to become a cornerstone of Braves' teams that won a record 14 straight division titles from 1991-2005, including a World Series title in 1995.

"I have always loved the city of Atlanta, and it will always be my home," Smoltz said in his statement. "I will cherish my 21 years with (manager) Bobby Cox and all my Braves' teammates. I continue to wish the Atlanta Braves nothing but success in the future."

Braves general manager Frank Wren declined comment when reached by e-mail. Boston general manager Theo Epstein was scheduled to meet with the media later in the day.

Smoltz began his career as a starter, winning 24 games and the NL Cy Young Award in 1996. Numerous elbow problems led him to shift to the bullpen to relieve the stress on his arm, and he set an NL record with 55 saves in his first full season as a closer in 2002.

After three years finishing games for the Braves, Smoltz moved back to the rotation in 2005 and didn't miss a beat, going 14-7 with a 3.06 ERA. He went 47-26 in his second run as a starter, but shoulder pain cut short the 2008 season after only six appearances. Smoltz tried to pitch one game as a reliever, then underwent surgery to fix what he said were "five or six problems," including his labrum, AC joint and biceps.

While acknowledging that similar operations have ended the careers of many others, Smoltz felt encouraged enough about his rehabilitation to begin making plans for the new season. The Braves, however, were reluctant to make a deal with the aging pitcher, especially coming off a dismal season in which they missed the playoffs for the third year in a row. □



Spanish tennis player world number one Rafael Nadal reacts after losing the first set against Gael Monfils of France during their quarterfinal match at the ATP Qatar tennis open in Doha, Qatar, Thursday, Jan. 8, 2009.

Associated Press

matches."

The tournament is a tuneup for the Australian Open, which begins Jan. 19. Last year, Nadal reached the semifinals for his best showing at the season's first major tournament.

"I will practice here and I fly out to Australia on Sunday," said the 22-year-old Nadal, who has already won five major titles. "I will not go with any bad feeling with this loss. I am playing well. I just need more matches." □

NBA Roundup

James, Cavaliers, set for rematch with Celtics

By The Associated Press

When the NBA champion Celtics take the court in Cleveland on Friday night, LeBron James expects to see the Boston team that opened the season 27-2, not the one that has lost six of its last eight games.

"It's not the end of the world. They've lost a few. They'll get it together," James said. "I bet they won't come in here on Friday sluggish."

After scoring 21 points in Cleveland's 111-81 home victory over Charlotte on Wednesday night, James gave a running commentary as he watched the final minutes of Boston's 89-85 loss to Houston on television.

The Cleveland star smiled at a rebound and putback inside by Yao Ming and questioned a long shot by Rafer Alston.

"What are you doing?" James moaned.

Boston lost at home for the first time since falling to Denver on Nov. 14 — a loss the Celtics followed with a 19-game winning streak.

"In our last timeout, you could see it in our guys' eyes. Like, 'Shoot, we're going to lose this home game,'" Celtics coach Doc Rivers said. "It bothered them. You could see that. And I was thinking, 'That's a good thing.'"

In Boston, Houston's Von Wafer hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with 44 seconds left, and Yao led the Rockets with 26 points and eight rebounds.

"Yao is unstoppable," Rockets forward Ron Artest said.

Paul Pierce scored 26 points for Boston, and Kevin Garnett had 18.

"Nobody said it was going to be easy," Garnett said. "I know, at times, we do make it look easy. We are a very, very confident team. ... I feel we have the mind-set to weather the storm." In Cleveland, Mo Williams added 15 points and Cleveland improved to 18-0 at home.

On Friday, the Celtics will arrive for a game pitting the Eastern Conference's premier powers, a rematch of last season's seven-game conference semifinal and a possible tease of what could come this spring. Boston holds a 1-0 edge this season after beating Cleveland 90-85 at home in the opener.

"They got us up there," Williams said. "It's our turn. It's payback time."

It's only January, but it will feel like June.

"I can't sit here and say it's another game," James said. "We're just looking forward to the challenge. If we want to be the best team, we have to beat the best. Boston is the best until somebody takes their crown."

Lakers 114, Warriors 106

At Oakland, Calif., Pau Gasol had 33 points and a career-high 18 rebounds, Kobe Bryant added 21 points and Los Angeles won its seventh in eight games.

Andrew Bynum had 18 points and 11 rebounds for the Lakers, coming off a home loss to New Orleans. Jamal Crawford had 25 points and nine assists for Golden State.

Trail Blazers 84, Pistons 83

At Portland, Ore., Travis Outlaw hit a fadeaway jumper with 8.9 seconds to go and Portland snapped Detroit's seven-game winning streak.

LaMarcus Aldridge led Portland with 26 points. Tayshaun Prince had 26 for Detroit.

Nuggets 108, Heat 97

At Denver, Chauncey Billups, Linas Kleiza and J.R. Smith scored 21 points apiece in Denver's fifth straight victory and seventh in eight games.

The Nuggets played without leading scorer Carmelo Anthony, out at least three weeks after fracturing a finger on his right hand Monday.

Dwyane Wade had 31 points for Miami.

Pacers 113, Suns 100

At Phoenix, Danny Granger hit a 3-pointer at the buzzer, and finished with a career-high 37 points for Indiana.

Amare Stoudemire led Phoenix with 23 points and 11 rebounds.

At Minneapolis, Randy Foye matched his career high with 32 points in just three quarters and Minnesota won its fourth straight.

Al Jefferson added 21 points and 13 rebounds for Minnesota, which has won six of its last eight following a 13-game losing streak. Russell Westbrook had 16 points and a career-high 12 assists for Oklahoma City.

At East Rutherford, N.J., Vince Carter had 25 points and a season-high 12 assists to help

New Jersey win its third straight at home.

Yi Jianlian added 20 points for the Nets, playing without scoring leader Devin Harris (sore right hamstring). Memphis rookie O.J. Mayo had 26 points.

In other NBA games Wednesday night, it was: the Los Angeles Lakers 114, Golden State 106; Portland 84, Detroit 83; Denver 108, Miami 97; Indiana 113, Phoenix 110; Minnesota 129, Oklahoma City 87; New Jersey 100, Memphis 89; Orlando 106, Atlanta 102; Toronto 99, Washington 93; Utah 116, New Orleans 90; and Philadelphia 110, Milwaukee 105.



Houston Rockets' Yao Ming (11) blocks the drive of Boston Celtics' Paul Pierce (34) as Rockets' Ron Artest (96) looks on during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Boston on Wednesday, Jan 7, 2009. Houston won 89-85.

Associated Press

Reigning MVP Ovechkin tops East All-Star roster



Washington Capitals' Alex Ovechkin, of Russia, takes a shot against Philadelphia Flyers goalie Martin Biron during the second period of an NHL hockey game Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009, in Washington.

Associated Press

By IRA PODELL
AP Hockey Writer

NEW YORK — Alex Ovechkin finally got his All-Star invitation.

Less than a week after Washington Capitals coach Bruce Boudreau called Ovechkin's omission from the Eastern Conference's starting lineup "dumb," the reigning NHL MVP was among 15 players picked Thursday to fill out the roster for the All-Star game on Jan. 25 in Montreal.

"I know it's going to be a sick atmosphere," Ovechkin, a three-time All-Star, said after practice in Arlington, Va. Boudreau was not too happy that his Southeast Division-leading club, second in the East with 67 points (27-11-3), will be represented by only Ovechkin. He mentioned center Nicklas Backstrom, defenseman Mike Green and left wing Alexander Semin as other Capitals who deserved consideration.

The starting lineup, determined by fan balloting online and via text messaging, featured four members of the host Montreal Canadiens and two from the Pittsburgh Penguins. All 30 teams must be represented in the game, leaving little room for multiple picks from clubs. "As a personal opinion, I don't agree with the process," Boudreau said. "People would much rather see the best players in the world, rather than one representative of every team."

The rebuilt Boston Bruins (29-7-4) — the owners of the second best record in the NHL behind San Jose — had three players chosen by the NHL's hockey operations department, after consultation with general managers. The West roster was announced Wednesday. The Bruins, off to their best start since the 1929-30 season, were rewarded with the selections of goalie Tim Thomas, defenseman Zdeno Chara and center Marc Savard. In last year's 8-7 victory by the East in Atlanta, Savard scored the winning goal in the final minute, Thomas stopped 14 of 18 shots in the third period and Chara had an assist and a plus-3 rating.

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week#2-17-OccidentalGrand-2Bdr Supreme,OceanFront US\$35,000	PlatinumPl. W#51 Marriott Surf. 2Bdr, Oceanview-US\$45,000	week#2biannual-DiviPhoenixStudio. R#404,Oceanfront- US\$6,000
week#2-17-OccidentalGrand-1B RoyalClubGrandLe.-US\$32,000	PlatinumPl. W#52- Marriott Surf. 2Bdr,OceanFront-US\$60,000	week# 3-DiviPhoenix -1Bdr R#601,Oceanview- US\$12,000
week#2-17-OccidentaGrandl-1B Delux,OceanView- US\$14,000	PlatinumPL.W#52- Marriott Surf. 1Bdr,Oceanview- US\$55,000	week#3-4, DiviPhoenix - 2Bdr R#416,Oceanfrnt-US\$25,000pw
week#2-17-OccidentalGrand-JR. Suite - OceanView - US\$16,000	FloatingW#18-50 Marriott Ocean 2Bdr, Oceanview -US\$ 20,000	week# 4 - DiviPhoenix - 1Bdr R#901- Oceanview-US\$11,000
week# 1-17OccidentalGrand-JR. Suite, Oceanview - US\$16,000	PlatinumW#1-17.Marriott Ocean 1Bdr, OceanView-US\$18,000	week# 4- DiviPhoenix - 1Bdr. R#1001,Oceanv- US\$10,000
week# 1-17OccidentalGrand-EX Studio, PoolView - US\$9,000	PlatinumW#1-17.Marriott Ocean 1Bdr,OceanFront-US\$30,000	week#5-DiviPhoenix-2Bdr/2bath. R#206,Oceanfront US\$23,000
week#2,3,4,5,6-LaCabana-1Bdx R#401d,OceanFr.-US\$18,000pw	PlatinumW#1-17.Marriott Ocean 2Bdr,OceanView-US\$26,000	week#6-7-DiviPhoenix - 2Bdr R#302,Oceanfro.-US\$25,000pw
week# 52 - La Cabana - 1Bdr R#442a-Ocean/pool-US\$17,000	PlatinumW#1-17.Marriott Ocean 2Bdr,OceanFront-US\$60,000	week# 3 - DiviPhoenix - 1Bdr R#209-OceanFront- US\$10,000
week#52(2x)-La Cabana -2Bdr R#128b/c-Ocean/po-US\$25,000	week# 1 -CostaLinda - 2Bdr. R#2031,Ocean/pool-US\$25,000	week#52 - DiviLinks - 1-Bdr R#2206-Poolview-US\$18,000
week# 52-La Cabana- 1Bdr R#137a,OceanView- US\$9,000	week#1 CostaLinda - 2Bdr R#1014,OceanView-US\$24,000	weeks#50,51,52,-DiviLinks-1Bdr R#4226-,Ocean/p-US\$16,000pw
week# 3,4,5,6LaCabana.-2Bdr. R#346e-OceanF.-US\$30,000pw	week# 4,5,6 -Costa Linda-2Bdr. R#1016,Oceanview-US\$24,000	week#1-2,-3 -DiviLinks - 1Bdr R#4226,Ocean/P-US\$16,000pw
week# 52,Aruban Resort - 1Bdr. R#4522 - Poolv - US\$9,500	week# 4, Costa Linda - 2Bdr. R#2012,Oceanview.-US\$24,000	week# 4 - DiviLinks - Studio. R#2108,Poolv - US\$14,000
week# 51,52,Aruban Resort-1Bdr R#4586, Poolv - US\$9,500 pw	week# 6, Costa Linda - 2 Bdr. R#1010,Oceanview-US\$24,000	week# 4-DiviLinks -1 Bdr. R#2105,Poolview-US\$16,000
week# 1&2, Aruban Resort- 1Bdr R#4585,Poolv - US\$8,000 pw	week# 5 - Costa Linda - 2 Bdr. R#3004,Ocean/Pool-US\$26,000	week# 5- DiviLinks - Studio R#2214,PoolV.- US\$14,000
week# 2, Aruban Resort-1Bdr. R#4584, Poolview - US\$8,000	week#1&2,Renaissance -1Br R#2508,GardenV-US\$10,000pw	week# 4- DiviPhoenix - 2 Bdr R#302,OceanFront-US\$23,000
week# 1,2,3,4 ArubanRes-1Bdr. R#1586,poolview- US\$8,000pw	week# 4 & 5 DiviPhoenix - 1Bdr R#108,OceanFR-US\$12,000pw	week# 51&52-DiviVillage-studio R#7204,OceanV,US\$10,000p.w
week# 1,2,3,4 ArubanRes-1Bdr. R#3586, poolv- US\$7,000pw	week# 2,Aruban Resort-1 Bdr. R#4584 ,PoolView-US\$.8,475	week# 3 - DiviVillage - Studio. R#8303,PoolOcean-US\$8,000
week# 4 Aruban Resort- 2Bdr. R#5510,poolview- US\$14,000	week# 1,Paradise B.V - 1 Bdr. R#227, Oceanfront-US\$15,000	week# 1-RIU Palace - 2Bdr R#269,Oceanfront-US\$27,000
week#52(2x).ArubanRes-2Bdr R#4524/20,poolv- US\$9,500pw	week# 2, ParadiseBV - 2Bdr. R# 207,Ocean/Pool-US\$15,000	week# 5&6-La Cabana - 2Bdr R#440b&c,Oce/p-US\$20,000pw
Platinum W#1-17.Marriott Surf. 2Bdr,OceanSide -US\$33,000	week# 3&4, ParadiseB.V - 1Bdr. R#101,Ocean/p-US\$12,000pw	week# 5 - La Cabana -1Br R#336a,Ocean/pool-US\$11,000
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Colombia recompensa guerrillera que se fugó con un secuestrado

BOGOTA(Reuters)-Colombia pagará una recompensa a una guerrillera de las FARC que se fugó con un empresario que llevaba 20 meses secuestrado, en la primera deserción de una rebelde con un rehén por el que exigían un millonario rescate, anunció el jueves el ministro de Defensa, Juan Manuel Santos.

La fuga de la guerrillera con el rehén y la decisión del Gobierno de pagar una recompensa, podría provocar decenas de deserciones de otros rebeldes con secuestrados y debilitar aún más a las izquierdistas Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), según fuentes de seguridad.

“Ella definitivamente merece los beneficios jurídicos y económicos y le vamos a cumplir como le cumpliremos a cualquier guerrillero que decida seguir su ejemplo”, dijo Santos refiriéndose a Zeneida Rueda, alias “Miriam”, quien

permaneció más de ocho años en la guerrilla. El funcionario se abstuvo de revelar la recompensa que pagará el Gobierno.

La rebelde de 37 años y madre de dos hijos escapó el 2 de enero con el empresario Luis Fernando Samudio de un campamento de las FARC cerca al pueblo de Cabrera, en el central departamento de Cundinamarca, y después de caminar más seis horas llegaron a un reten del Ejército.

Se trata de la primera deserción de un miembro de la guerrilla con un rehén de carácter económico después de que en octubre del año pasado se fugó Wilson Bueno, alias “Isaza” con el ex congresista Oscar Tulio Lizcano quien llevaba más de 8 años secuestrado.

El político hacía parte de un grupo de 29 personas que las FARC buscan intercambiar con el Gobierno del presidente Alvaro Uribe por unos 500



La desertora de la guerrilla colombiana Zeneida Rueda Calderón, alias ‘Miryam’, durante una conferencia de prensa en Bogotá, 8 ene 2009. Colombia pagará una recompensa a una guerrillera de las FARC que se fugó con un empresario que llevaba 20 meses secuestrado, en la primera deserción de una rebelde con un rehén por el que exigían un millonario rescate, anunció el jueves el ministro de Defensa, Juan Manuel Santos. REUTERS/John Vizcaino (COLOMBIA)

Venezuela despidió 2008 con inflación del 30,9 pct

CARACAS (Reuters) - La inflación en Venezuela continuó disparándose en el 2008 al cerrar en un 30,9 por ciento, la mayor del continente, según cifras divulgadas el jueves por el Banco Central.

El Gobierno izquierdista del presidente Hugo Chávez había calculado inicialmente una tasa inflacionaria del 11 por ciento para el ejercicio, pero debió reestimarla en varias ocasiones obligado por el continuo crecimiento de los precios.

Para el 2009, las autoridades económicas han estimado una inflación del 15 por ciento, pero analistas aseguran que será mayor debido a que el Ejecutivo tendrá que adoptar medidas para paliar los coletazos de la crisis económica global, como mayores impuestos e incluso una eventual devaluación.

El Banco Central de Venezuela dijo en un comunicado que en el 2008 los bienes acumularon un incremento del 33,9 por ciento, superior al 26,8 por ciento de los servicios.

Caracas fue la ciudad venezolana con la mayor inflación en el 2008, con un avance de los precios del 31,9 por ciento, muy superior al 22,5 por ciento del 2007. Adicionalmente, el Índice de Precios al Consumidor del Área Metropolitana de Caracas -que hasta hace unos meses fue utilizado por años como la cifra de inflación de referencia- fue el más alto desde 1997. □



rebeldes presos. Isaza recibió una recompensa de más de 400.000 dólares y viajó a Francia.

“El Gobierno reitera su política de recompensar

económicamente y a través de beneficios jurídicos a cualquier miembro de la guerrilla que tome la decisión de ayudar a liberar a un secuestrado”, reiteró Santos. Además de los

rehenes de carácter político, las FARC mantienen secuestradas a cientos de personas por las que exige millonarios rescates, de acuerdo con el Gobierno. □

En Colombia

Viceministra de Relaciones Exteriores Clemencia Forero Ucrós tomó posesión de su cargo

BOGOTA, Colombia - “Estaban preguntando cuántas veces ha sido nombrada la doctora Clemencia como Viceministra. Y ella dijo: tres, y entonces cuando uno oye eso, se siente muy tranquilo. No solo como persona o como amigo, con la gratitud que le tengo desde que llegué aquí, cuando era más chiquito y vine a trabajar con usted en un proyecto, del cual aprendí mucho”.

De esta forma, el Canciller, Jaime Bermúdez Merizalde, se refirió a la Viceministra de Relaciones Exteriores, Clemencia Forero Ucrós, quien tomó posesión de su cargo en el Palacio de San Carlos.

“Una persona con su experiencia, su profesionalismo, su amor por Colombia, su capacidad de trabajar con los demás y su inteligencia es garantía para una responsabilidad como esta”, agregó el Ministro Bermúdez.

“Es un privilegio tenerla de Viceministra, que es como tenerla de Ministra”, aseguró el Canciller.

Por su parte, la Viceministra agradeció la generosidad de las palabras del Canciller y

la confianza que el Presidente, Álvaro Uribe Vélez, ha depositado en ella. “Creo que aportó a esta institución la experiencia adquirida en estos muros y en esta casa, que tanto quiero”, señaló Forero Ucrós. Aseguró que esta es una experiencia abierta. “No es hermética, ni aislada. Es una experiencia que quiere poner al servicio la ejecución de la agenda de la política exterior, que acertadamente han diseñado el Presidente y el Canciller”, explicó.

Habló de su paso por Ginebra como Jefe de Misión ante las Naciones Unidas y destacó que le permitió profundizar en la visión de un mundo global e interdependiente que le ha correspondido vivir al país.

Sostuvo que en un escenario como Ginebra, “Colombia es reconocida como una democracia fuerte, estable, como un espacio de oportunidades para el comercio, la inversión, la libre empresa y las libertades”.

Esta información ha sido suministrada por el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Colombia a través del Consulado de su país en Aruba. □



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